METHOD OF TREATING BIOLOGICAL TISSUE BY MICROWAVE-IRRADIATION

[0001]

Field of The Invention:

The present invention is in the field of regenerative medical technology in which the function of a particular organ or tissue of a patient is normalized by transplantation when the function is lost or otherwise abnormal. More particularly it relates to a method for preparing transplantable tissues from native tissues of mammalian origin by removing cell components or fixing the tissue using a fixing agent such as glutaraldehyde.

[0002]

Background Art:

Scafold materials are prepared from native tissues for clinical application by chemically treating the tissue with a fixing agent such as glutaraldehyde or by decellularizing the tissue. In the heart valve replacement, for example, xenogeneic heart valves are prepared from porcine heart valves or bovine pericardia by treating with glutaraldehyde to diminish their immunogenicity. These xenogeneic valves are well anti-clotting but durable only for 5-10 years in

young recipients. Therefore, they are normally transplanted to old recipients over 60 years old.
[0003]

Since tissue bank systems have been organized in Europe and America around 1985 and also in Japan in recent years, allogeneic cryopreserved valves from deceased donors have been clinically used. The allogeneic valves are less thrombogenic than mechanical valves, more durable than xenogeneic valves and less susceptible to infections than both. However, a critical problem is the fact that the number of available valves is absolutely insufficient. Moreover, cases in which functional failure appeared at relatively early stage have been reported among young recipients suggesting the involvement of immune reactions. In Ross operation know to be effective in young recipients, autologous pulmonary valve is transplanted to aortic valve site and the impaired pulmonary valve is reconstructed with cryopreserved allogeneic valve. The characteristic feature of the autologous pulmonary valve transplanted to the aortic valve site is that it is growable as the recipient grows. In contrast, mechanical valves and xenogeneic valves as well as cryopreserved allogeneic valves are not growable and re-transplatation is often needed for

children. In order to eliminate the above problems, several studies have been reported to remove donor cells from allogeneic valves so that their immunogenicity and involvement of immune reactions are diminished to increase the durability and autogenesis of transplanted valves.

[0004]

A decellularization method using a chemical solution called "SynerGraft" was developed by CryoLife, U.S.A. It was reported that the decellularized tissue by this method was infiltrated into autologous cellular structure within several months and recellularized with autologous cells.

[0005]

Harverich et al. of Hannover University, School of Medicine, Germany published a decellularization method using a detergent Triton X-100 and proteolytic enzyme tripsin solutions.

[0006]

However, washing with detergent or other chemical solutions alone is not sufficiently effective to remove bacteria, viruses and other contaminants from the interior of tissue because the washing depends on diffusion and penetration of the washing solution from surfaces of the tissue. Because of these limitations,

complete decellularization and removal of bacteria and viruses are hardly possible for large tissue materials. In order to achieve satisfactory effects by the chemical washing, it is necessary to increase the degree of treatment. This may lead to problems of post-graft calcification and removal of residual treating chemicals. As evidenced from BSE and CJD infections in the dura transplantation, safety assurance is very important for the tissue to be transplanted. Currently known treating processes do not assure complete inactivation of viral contaminants and infection incidents may often occur from the transplanted tissue contaminated with viruses.

[0007]

The decellularized xenogeneic or allogeneic tissues are recellularized by seeding and culturing autologous cells for transplantation as a hybrid regenerative tissue.

[0008]

Disclosure of The Invention:

.It is, therefore, an object of this invention to provide a method which can eliminate or ameliorate the disadvantages of prior art, namely the method can accomplish, first, removal of cellular components, bacteria and viruses from large size tissues, second,

treatment without impairing the biomechanical properties of the tissue, and, thirdly, sterilization of the tissue in a simple manner in a short period of time.

[0009]

According to the present invention, there is provided a method of treating native tissues of mammalian origin comprising immersing said tissue in a treating solution, and irradiating said tissue with microwave while maintaining the temperature thereof at a temperature in the range between 0℃ and 40℃.

[0010]

Brief Description of The Accompanying Drawings:

Fig. 1 is a schematic illustration of an exemplary system for carrying out the present invention.

[0011]

Fig. 2 is a microscopic view of a specimen of porcine heart valve tissue taken in cross-section. The specimen treated with the prior art solution is shown in the left while the specimen treated with the prior art solution in conjunction with microwave-irradiation according to the present invention is shown in the right. Residual nuclei are observed in the interior of the tissue treated with the prior art solution alone (lower left).

[0012]

Fig. 3 is a graph showing the efficiency of removal of Triton X-100 from decellularized porcine heart valve. The method of the present invention enables the time required for removal of Triton X-100 to be decreased to about 1/10 compared to the prior method.

[0013]

Best Mode For Carrying Out The Invention:

The method of the present invention finds use in the treatment of native tissues for preparing transplantable tissues by decellularizing the native tissue. In this case, the treating solution may be pure water, a hypertonic solution, a hypotonic solution, a detergent solution, an enzyme solution, a liquid medium, or a mixture thereof with a small proportion of an organic solvent.

[0014]

The method of the present invention also finds use for preparing transplantable tissues by fixing native tissues. The treating solution in this case is a solution of fixing chemicals such as glutaraldehyde.

[0015]

In either treatment, the prior art method without microwave-irradiation requires a relatively long period of time until the treating solution migrates

throughout the tissue because the solution gradually diffuses and penetrates from the tissue surfaces. This may result in a risk of contamination of the tissue. The irradiation of native tissues with microwave in accordance with the present invention enables the treating time required for penetrating the treating solution throughout the tissue to be decreased to about 1/10 compared with the prior art method. Thus substantial improvement in the treatment efficiency may be achieved while preventing the tissue from contamination. Furthermore, the present invention can decellularize the tissue even from deep portions in a short period of time which has been otherwise difficult or impossible to accomplish.

[0016]

Microwave has hitherto been used in the field of histopathology e.g. for tissue fixing, bone decalcification, or defatting purposes, and in the histoimmunological chemistry. It is believed, however, that the application of microwave for the purpose of preparation of transplantable tissues was not known.

[0017]

In the new method according to the present invention, the native tissue of mammalian origin is placed in a container made of a

microwave-transmitting material such as glass or plastics. Then a treating solution is poured into the container until the tissue is completely immersed in the solution. The treating solution may be a detergent solution, a hypotonic solution or a hypertonic solution when decellularization is intended, or a solution of fixing chemicals such as glutaraldehyde when cell fixing is intended. The tissue in the treating solution is then irradiated with microwave while maintaining the tissue at a temperature between 0℃ and 40℃. Because the tissue is heated, it is necessary to cool the tissue during the irradiation with microwave. This may be accomplished using a commercially available rapid microwave-treatment apparatus by providing the apparatus with cooling means. To this end the container containing the tissue and the treating solution is place in the microwave oven and a antifreezing coolant is circulated between arround the container and a cooling apparatus external of the microwave oven. A temperature sensor is disposed in the tissue container to control the microwave oven and the cooling apparatus in response to the sensed temperature to maintain the tissue at a temperature between 0℃ and 40℃. Apart from histopathological procedures, preparation of transplantable tissues

requires to prevent denaturing of tissue matrix so as to preserve the biomechanical properties thereof. Therefore, it is imperative to avoid the temperature below 0℃ or above 40℃ during irradiation with microwave.

[0018]

An exemplary system for carrying out the present invention is shown schematically in Fig. 1. The system comprise a microwave oven 1 having a microwave generator 12. A coolant vessel 2 is disposed in the interior of the oven and filled with an anti-freezing coolant 21. The tissue container 3 containing a treating solution 31 and a tissue 4 to be treated is centrally placed in the coolant vessel 2. The coolant vessel 2 and the tissue container 3 are made of a microwave-transmitting material such a glass, polypropylene or polystyrene. As described earlier, the microwave will heat the treating solution 31 and thus the tissue 4 to irreversibly denature the tissue matrix by heat. Consequently, a cooling apparatus 7 is disposed externally to the oven 1 and the coolant 31 is circulated between the coolant vessel 2 and the cooling apparatus through the associated conduit means 5 and 6. The coolant 21 warmed in the vessel 2 is conveyed to a heat exchanger 72 of the cooling apparatus through

the conduit 6 and the coolant cooled there is returned to the vessel 2 through the conduit 5 using a pump 71. The temperature of the coolant in the vessel 21 is monitored by a sensor 11 to generate a control signal. A controller 13 controls the operational time of the microwave generator 12 intemittently and automatically in response to the control signal to maintain the temperature at a constant level between 0℃ and 40℃, for example, at 10℃. Means for uniformly propagating the microwave such as fan or the like may be provided in the microwave oven.

[0019]

The method of the present invention may be used in conjunction with a known decellularizing method. For example, the tissue may be pre-treated with a detergent solution or an enzyme solution to remove the cellular components and then irradiated with microwave to remove residual chemicals from the tissue by washing.

[0020]

The method of the present invention finds use in the following treatments.

1. Soft mammalian tissues for use in transplantation

Decellularization of soft tissues obtained from donors of cerebral or heart failure death or xenogeneic

porcine or bovine soft tissues for the preparation of transplantable tissues. The efficiency of removal of cellular components by washing in the subsequent step is largely improved. At the same time, the immunogenecity of the tissue is substantially diminished.

[0021]

2. Hard mammalian tissues for use in transplantation

Similar to soft tissues, hard tissues such as bone, cartilage or teeth may be decellularized to prepare transplantable tissues.

[0022]

3. Treatment of other biological tissues for medical use

Tissues of animal or plant origin may be treated for the purpose of destructing cells therein.

[0023]

Examples:

1. Fresh porcine hearts were purchased from a breeding farm and transported at 4℃. The warm ischemic time of the heart was controlled with 20 minutes. Pulmonary valves and blood vessels were excised and washed with Hank's solution and immersed in a 1% solution of Triton X-100. Using the system schematically shown in Fig. 1, the excised tissues were irradiated with microwave intermmitently at 20℃ to

remove cells. After treating the tissue was washed with PBS to remove residual cells. Specimens of the decellularized tissue were stained with HE and histologically evaluated by the microscopic observation.

[0024]

As shown in the photograph of Fig. 2, the porcine pulmonary valve leaflet was decellularized even in deep interior portions by the irradiation with microwave in conjunction with the treatment of the detergent solution while the treatment with the detergent solution alone failed complete decellularization.

[0025]

2. Porcine heart valves purchased from the same breeding farm were decellularized by immersing in a 1% aqueous solution of Triton X-100 for 24 hours. Then the decellularized heart valves were immersed in PBS and irradiated with microwave intermittently at 10℃ for 48 hours. As shown in the graph of Fig. 3, cytotoxic Triton X-100 was removed from the tissue within several days by the irradiation with microwave while about 3 weeks were required to remove the detergent from the tissue when the tissue was not irradiated with microwave.